

Hart Van Denburg, *CityPages*

Rep. Betty McCollum found herself the target last week of a racist fax message after she tried to defund the U.S. Army's budget for sponsoring a NASCAR car, and Republicans put the kibosh on her effort.

But the St. Paul Democrat has switched gears and hit the gas on a new proposal aimed at accomplishing the same thing, and then going even further: She wants to repeal tax breaks for track owners, as well.

If the Republican-controlled House is serious about the government getting out of the business of funding community health care, veterans benefits, Planned Parenthood and Head Start, she asks, then why in the world would they be willing to pay millions of dollars a year for stickers on racing cars?

"I started to look what is in this large defense budget to see what's not related to security that we could redirect to critical supplies or mission support," she said. "Or in the case of racetrack owners, what are some of the special tax perks that some of the special interests are getting?"

She says she's going to introduce a bill that would prohibit the Pentagon from sponsoring any kind of racing: dragsters, Indy cars, stock cars, motorcycles and more.

With Republicans controlling the House agenda, and trying to make sure their NASCAR dads are happy, we don't expect this bill to make it to the starting line.

"This shows that she is on the warpath against NASCAR," says North Carolina Republican Rep. Patrick McHenry. "This is more about her disdain for NASCAR than it really is about saving taxpayers' money."

McCollum says she's just trying to make the tough choices when it comes to cutting the budget -- just like the Republicans say they are.